comparable with industry standards. The Government has taken various steps to reduce the gap between demand and supply of skilled pilots. These include conditionally increasing the age-limit to 65 years for pilots for exercising the privileges of their licences for commercial transport operations under prescribed conditions for pilots, upgradation and modernisation of traning in frastructure of Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Uran Akademi (IGRUA) to enhance its training capacity, setting up of a world class flying training institute at Gondia, Maharashtra and assistance to flying clubs by allocating trainer aircraft through Directorate General of Civil Aviation/Aero Club of India.

GoM's report on merger of IA/AI

†3517. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Group of Ministers constituted to recommend measures regarding the merger of Air India and Indian Airlines has submitted its report to Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Employees Organization of Air India and Indian Airlines have also been consulted for addressing different matters relating to the employees of the said airlines;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) by when both the airlines are proposed to be merged?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a), (b) and (e) The Group of Ministers in its meeting held on 21st February, 2007 cleared the merger of Air India and Indian Airlines into a new entity. Subsequently, this was also approved by the Cabinet on 1st March, 2007. As a first step, the new Company namely "National Aviation Company of India Limited" has been incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956 on 30.03.2007. Financial and legal formalities for merging the two airlines are likely to be completed by July, 2007.

(c) and (d) 11 Employees Unions/Associations etc. of Air India and 8 of

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Indian Airlines were invited for discussions by Minister of Civil Aviation on 17.01.2007. It was assured to them that there will be no retrenchment and all employees will continue in the merged company. Further, all legitimate employee interests will be protected. A 3 tier Grievance Redressal Machinery has been put into place to address the employee grievances.

Modernization of Non-Metro Airports

3518. SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is proposed to modernize 35 non-metro airports;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the allocation, airport-wise;

(c) whether Expression of Interest has been received from bidders for development of these airports; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The works on the development of infrastructure on the airside for strengthening and extension of runway, apron & taxi tracks as also the extension/modification or new construction of the Terminal Building in commensurate with traffic growth are being undertaken by Airports Authority of India (AAI) at 35 select Non-Metro Airports namely Ahmedabad, Amritsar, Guwahati, Jaipur, Udaipur, Trivandrum, Lucknow, Goa, Madurai, Mangalore, Agatti, Aurangabad, Khajuraho, Rajkot, Vadodara, Bhopal, Indore, Nagpur, Visakhapatnam, Trichy, Bhubaneswar, Coimbatore, Patna, Port Blair, Varanasi, Agartala, Dehradun, Imphal, Ranchi, Raipur, Agra, Chandigarh, Dimapur, Jammu and Pune.

The city side development of select airports from amongst these 35 Non-Metro airports will be taken up in the Public Private Partnership (PPP). The cost of development will depend upon design, capacity and requirement of the airports individually or cluster-wise. Total cost of the project has been estimated to be Rs. 4660 crore (aprox.).

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.